

Medical helicopters upgraded

by Vincent Picard
Staff writer

Fort Carson's 571st Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance) is in the process of upgrading their helicopters from UH-1V Hueys to UH-60A Blackhawks in a move to improve mission capabilities.

"Fort Carson is coming up to speed," said Maj. Donald West, detachment commander. "We are the latest unit to make the upgrade. Fort Lewis, (Wash.), is doing it next summer."

According to West, the Blackhawks will improve the unit's mission by increasing range and speed.

"We will be able to fly further and faster between fuel stops, giving us a more timely response to missions," he said. "We will also have an increase in weight capacity for equipment."

The detachment will continue to use their 12 Hueys for missions

until the transition is complete. They received their first four out of 15 Blackhawks June 30, and only one has been modified completely for evacuation flights.

West said that the first day the new helicopters will be available for use in the area is Aug. 15. The helicopters will not be used at the detachments other site, Fort Bliss, Texas, until Sept. 15, when three regularly scheduled Hueys will be replaced with the newly modified Blackhawks.

"We are currently training Blackhawk maintainers and pilots to the MEDEVAC mission," said West.

All of the incoming Blackhawks are from various units and installations in the continental United States. They are turning in the Hueys in a variety of locations, including four to the United Nations' mission in Haiti and three to a depot-level rebuilt, according to West.

Because of the Blackhawk's



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Spc. Josh Anderson, 571st Medical Detachment crew chief, examines a newly equipped UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter.

larger size, West said that another part of the transition will be to visit the various emergency medical services and hospitals in the area to present the new helicopters and to reinforce safety precautions around the landing areas.

Despite the work involved in

the transition, West said that the detachment is happy about the change.

"We are looking forward to the transition," he said. "This will greatly enhance our wartime capabilities, as well as our civilian missions."

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